

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 2, 4, 20 and 21 without prejudice or disclaimer.

IN THE ABSTRACT

Please delete the original abstract in its entirety and substitute the following as a new Abstract:

--A method for the rapid detection of actively respiring microorganisms comprises the steps of detecting the presence of microorganisms utilizing microbial enzymatic conversion of tetrazolium salts to formazan products, detecting the presence of formazan product.—

Please replace the current Abstract with the attached sheet containing the above Abstract.

REMARKS

By the foregoing, claims 1, 3, 5-19, 22-24 are pending, and claims 2, 4, 20 and 21 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The claims are supported by the original specification and claims. An Office Action on the merits is now awaited. Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Applicant respectfully requests that these amendments be entered in the subject application prior to examination.

Respectfully submitted,

HELLER EHRMAN WHITE & MCAULIFFE LLP

Date: December 19, 2001

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